

▼ JANUARY 15 • 1996

**SNOWY  
TREES  
FROST &  
FLAKE  
TIME  
PERHAPS  
A POEM  
TO BAKE**

Poetry page on the back cover.

**When it's  
winter you  
need a home**

Spare Change looks at some  
of the tougher housing  
alternatives...

▼ Pages 8, 9

# Spare Change

Helping People Help Themselves

▼ SOLD BY DONATION

PHOTO • KEITH WILEY

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Send us a great photo of your pet, or your pet and friends. There will be prizes for every photo published, plus a grand prize for the best one. Send in your photo, along with the name of your pet(s), and your address to Spare Change 10527-96 St. Edmonton T5H 2H6. Deadline for your photo submission is March 15, 1996. Please be sure to send us a copy only, submissions will not be returned.

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NEWS • of the World

## Getting into trouble with strong faith

Superstition has been wreaking havoc in the Far East. In Bangkok three people died and 11 collapsed after drinking a potion brewed to ward off evil spirits. "I wanted to improve the quality of my life," said one drinker. "And have been on the toilet ever since." In Cambodia, meanwhile, a DJ was killed while attempting to prove the efficacy of an Islamic good-luck charm. Chiang 'Fat One' Goan, 22, of Phnom Penh, had become convinced of the charm's powers after miraculously surviving a 100-foot fall from the

top of an apartment block. When someone called his radio show, therefore and questioned the talisman's potency, he had no qualms whatsoever about offering to be shot on air "to prove my faith". A soldier was swiftly located and, after Goan had said a prayer, took aim and fired. "Fat One said 'Darn,'" explained one listener. "And then everything went quiet. My hero is dead." "Last year he claimed Allah had made him invisible," recalled one colleague. "And then got run over by a bus." ♦

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SPARE

CHANGE

JANUARY 15

1996

## How dangerous one's birthday can be

Belgian Philippe Sclaubas spent his 60th birthday playing Napoleon in a re-enactment of the Battle of Waterloo, only to suffer a fatal heart attack when enemy soldiers charged at him screaming "You fat French bastard!" Our Swedish birthday boy Kurt Jarlson, who plunged from his seventh floor flat dressed as the Grim Reaper. Mr Jarlson, of Stockholm had dreamt every night for 30 years that he'd die before he was 50. So overjoyed was he to be alive on the morning of his 50th birthday that he arranged a

massive jamboree to toast his survival. "Kurt was dressed as Death, with a big scythe," explained one party goer. "He was running around shouting 'I'm alive~' but then he fell out of the window." The story doesn't end there, however, for as Mr Jarlson tumbled earthwards he was spotted by 85-year-old Ingmar Gunnarsson, who cried "Just one more year, Father Death!" before promptly suffering a terminal coronary. ♦

## Cover-up when you're riding the bus!

Travelling on public transport is becoming an increasingly hazardous affair, as discovered by Texan, Roland Snoob, when a fellow bus passenger mistook him for Darth Vader. "She screamed, 'You raped R2D2!'" recalled Mr Snoob, "and then tried to strangle me." Still more traumatic were the experiences of Iranian, Mohammed Gemal, who received 20 lashes after being caught travelling on a bus disguised as a woman. Mr Gemal, of Tehran, had undertaken the journey as a bet. All went well for the first part of the trip, with Mr Gemal —wearing a traditional veil and a full-length dress— successful-

ly conning himself into the female section of a bus. Things started to go wrong, however, when the woman beside him queried why he smelt of aftershave. His claims that it wasn't aftershave but a "lovely lamb stew" were not believed and it wasn't long before he had been stripped naked by irate female passengers, battered with a marrow and tied to the front of the bus, where he remained until it reached its destination and he was arrested. "It's a shame," said the chastened prankster. "because I once travelled 400 miles disguised as a monkfish." ♦

## Shoplifters augment their anatomies

Shoplifters are becoming ever more exotic in their choice of goods. In New York light-fingered Sybil Serth, 31, was rushed to hospital with hypothermia after concealing six frozen quails in her bra and four in her panties. "My son must have put them there while I wasn't looking," she later explained. In Paris, meanwhile, a shopper who claimed he suffered from chronic piles was found to have an entire computer clenched between his thighs. Staff noticed nothing peculiar about Maurice Obatim when he entered their

shop save that he was wearing a large kaftan. "He wandered around," said one assistant. "And then disappeared behind a large computer display. When he came out he was waddling and holding his bottom." Store detectives confronted the man, but let him go after he explained he'd had a sudden attack of "throbbing grapes". Only when he tripped over a vacuum cleaner cord and sprawled on the ground did the truth emerge. "It's certainly the chunkiest hemorrhoid I've ever seen," said one police officer. ♦

Above articles compiled by Paul Sussman in *The Big Issue*, London England's street-sold magazine.

## VENDOR • Profile

# Kas

BY MICHAEL WALTERS GLASEL

**Kasian was out of work for three years up until last April. He panhandled the streets and the money he made was spent mostly on alcohol. "I'd get drunk all the time because I felt so shitty about myself and my life."**

PHOTO • C. WATSON

**T**hen Kas, as he is known by his friends, started selling Spare Change. Since the spring he has carved out a customer base of well over a hundred people and he is now in charge of Spare Change newspaper weekend distribution.

Kas sells the newspaper in front of Save-on Foods on Calgary Trail and 33rd Ave. in Edmonton. He appreciates the relationship that he has with his customers and with the staff at Save-on.

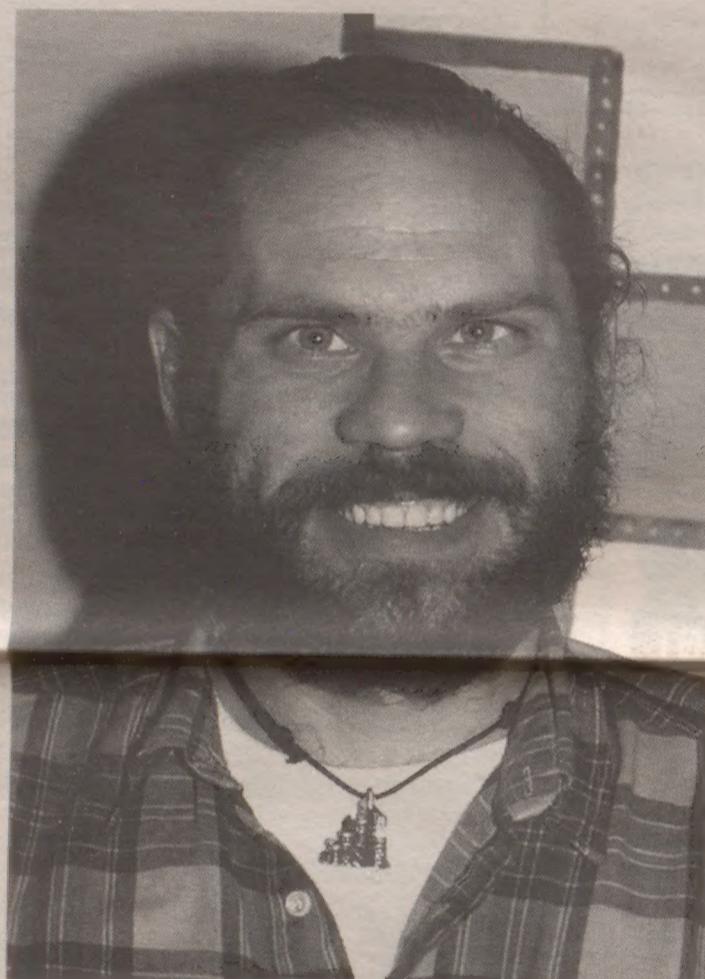
"One day I was standing inside the store and the manager came and informed me that the staff had chipped in and bought me a new pair of winter boots. The ones I had must have looked pretty old."

The generosity seems endless to Kas. One of his regular customers also gave him a new winter jacket.

"The people are great. Customers and staff are always dragging me inside and buying me coffee. I finally feel like I'm doing something right."

Kas came to Edmonton seven years ago from Calgary. He left Calgary to get away from the chemical scene, and to try and stop drinking.

"When the only people you know in a city are junkies, and drunks, it's probably not a good idea to live there."



When he talks about his past, and the kind of life he's lived, Kas is soft-spoken, and a very real person. "My past is exactly that. I used to have to have a couple drinks before I could even get out of bed in the morning. That was the way it was, but that's not the way it is now. My present is something I can feel good about."

Kas supports himself entirely with his Spare Change sales. He has been free from social services for the past two months, and couldn't be happier. His dedication to the paper is astounding. He looks at it

like a business and he's glad to be a part of it. "I'm so grateful for Spare Change. They've allowed me to define responsibility for myself." Being in charge of weekend distribution of the paper has also given Kas the opportunity to help people who have been, or are, in situations similar to his own. He is there to uphold the policies of the paper as well as to help all of the vendors as much as he can. Most of his time is spent selling, or doing work for the paper. During the week he'll sell from noon to at least ten at night. On weekends he distributes papers to other vendors from one to six, and then rushes to Save-on to sell again until ten o'clock. He is also talking with managers of other Save-on stores about allowing Spare Change vendors to sell there. With his increased confidence, he finds it a lot easier to deal with other people both in personal and business situations.

As far as his future is concerned, Kas would like to save enough money to buy a motorbike.

That would make it easier for him to find a second job, which would certainly increase his stability. The majority of his experience is in the roofing business, and he would like to return to that line of work. For now he intends to work as hard as he can for Spare Change and to continue improving his life. He plans to keep winning his battle with alcohol, and to become a completely responsible and confident man.

"I took my future from looking like a graveyard to something I want to live again. That's what I had to do, and what I'll keep on doing." ♦

### The people who bring you Spare Change

SPARE CHANGE JANUARY 1996  
This newspaper exists because of the efforts of the people who sell it to you on the street, the vendors. For our vendors **Spare Change** is a job that helps them to be independent and self-employed. Each issue we highlight one of our vendors in Vendor Profile to let you know a little bit about the people who bring you **Spare Change**. ♦

### Spare Change Authorized Vendor

All Spare Change vendors are required to wear an ID badge (contents above) and abide by a code of conduct. If you have any comments about our vendors, phone our distribution manager in your city (see page 7).

Vendor Name \_\_\_\_\_

Number \_\_\_\_\_

Authorized by \_\_\_\_\_

#### SPARE CHANGE VENDOR'S CODE

- I will be sober at all times while working
- I will be polite to all members of the public
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## LETTERS

# Please -get political

Sometimes I find myself feeling quite discouraged with the shortage of meaningful, good-paying jobs offered in my area. Then I read some of the articles in Spare Change and find a level of determination and optimism surge through my heart. Sometimes I relate to the stories I read; sometimes I'm simply thankful I've never actually had to tough it out on the streets. But always I fear the downward spiral. The stories and articles in Spare Change show the world that changing lives requires courage and determination - and they encourage me to keep trying when my only comments seem to be, "been there, done that."

Although I'm again unemployed, I try to support your newspaper when I can. I know there are a lot of people in my situation who also "pick-up" your paper from time to time. What I would hope is that you could add a section of "classifieds" that could list free or nominal charge classes for people who have some skills but are obviously not well-trained enough for "decent" jobs.

Right now I'm on UIC which is due to expire shortly. I went to Manpower to ask for training. I knew the classes I needed and where to get them. My "counsellor" informed me that I would not be

"penalized" for attending classes (in other words, cut off UIC for not being available for work). However, I would have to pay the \$1,700 course tuition. I thought he was joking! I struggle to find money to pay for my bus fare and pay my health insurance premiums - premiums not eligible for subsidy because I "earn" \$418 biweekly on "pogey". That may seem like a lot compared to social assistance, but I'm locked into a rent lease of nearly \$500 and also have the little extras like prescriptions and regular charges for resume services, etc. At this point I am seeing a cardiologist also. I should be concerned, I'm not 35 yet. So far, the doctors are assuming my problem is stress. I wonder why.

Please, get political with your articles. I understand Klein and company have to cut back, but I don't think they realize the distress they are placing on us "commoners". One lady I know works overtime at a bank by approximately 6-10 hours per week because of "cutbacks". She always has too much to do because of recent layoffs. She never complains though, and she never asks to be compensated for her overtime because she's too scared she'll lose her job.

Another lady I know, a young mother of two, living in suburbia, is tolerating the toll of living with an

abusive husband because she's terrified of losing her children to poverty, a lack of financial assistance, and unhelpful government agencies and legal authorities.

I really don't believe Klein understands the absolute hell many people suffer through in their day-to-day existence. It's almost as if he's saying, "I don't care how smart you are or how successful you could be; if you're not independently wealthy, you can't pay enough taxes to keep me in a lucrative job, therefore you must die on the streets."

Many of us feel we are...

Many of us need the encouragement we read about in Spare Change. The changed lives of people who were once "written off" is a living testament to those of us who struggle to hang on to our faith in mankind. (No wonder I believe in God! There's got to be a better place!)

Of course, I could ramble on and on about the social injustice rampant in our society. Thank you for listening and please keep up the good work! ♦

Name withheld  
Calgary

## "Quotation" Quiz

B Y L . R . C .



"A BIRD IN THE HAND IS WORTH TWO IN THE BUSH"

## Scrunching in for winter

One of Canada's top pollsters says that well-off Canadians "don't give a shit about the poor". That was one of Angus Reid's conclusions from his year-end survey of Canadian attitudes. The survey looked at the results of a country increasingly divided into "haves" and "have-nots". The "haves", who say they are even better off than they were ten years ago, just don't want to know about what's happening to others who are getting the smaller and smaller other piece of the pie.

Poverty is out of sight, out of mind, if you're at home with your three-car garage and jacuzzi.

In the United States, and in Europe, poverty is perhaps more obvious, as people live in the streets homeless. In Canada things get a little more hidden, a little easier to ignore because it just isn't possible to live on the streets this time of year. Or at least very few attempt it, and of those who do some die every winter.

In our cities people have to scramble for heated shelter and the results of what they sometimes end up with can be pretty shocking. Fiona McNair's tour of an inner city rooming house wasn't pleasant and she tells us about it on pages eight and nine. \$200 a month is about the bottom price for

even the scuzziest room, and as she explains, it can be pretty rough.

Many people are squeezed into rough accommodation by lack of money. Welfare rates in Alberta are completely unreasonable in housing allowances. The Edmonton Coalition on Homelessness released a report last month showing welfare falls far short of reasonable rents in all types of household. Hardest hit are singles, allowed \$165 a month for rent. But a four-person family is expected to spend only \$480 and squeeze into a basement suite or a one-bedroom apartment somewhere.

Half the people on social assistance are children who cannot change their housing situation, the report concludes. There are families moving in with older parents. Housing is getting more and more crowded. But everyone is in somewhere, out of sight and, we hope, not completely forgotten by everyone else.

### Watch for us more often - Now twice a month!

This is the first ever mid-month issue of Spare Change. Now two times a month you'll have a chance to buy this street-sold paper with people stories, fun articles and more.

We will do our best to keep the paper upbeat and exciting, and at the same time let you read some of the stories of people who are up against things, and struggling to make it in our cities today.

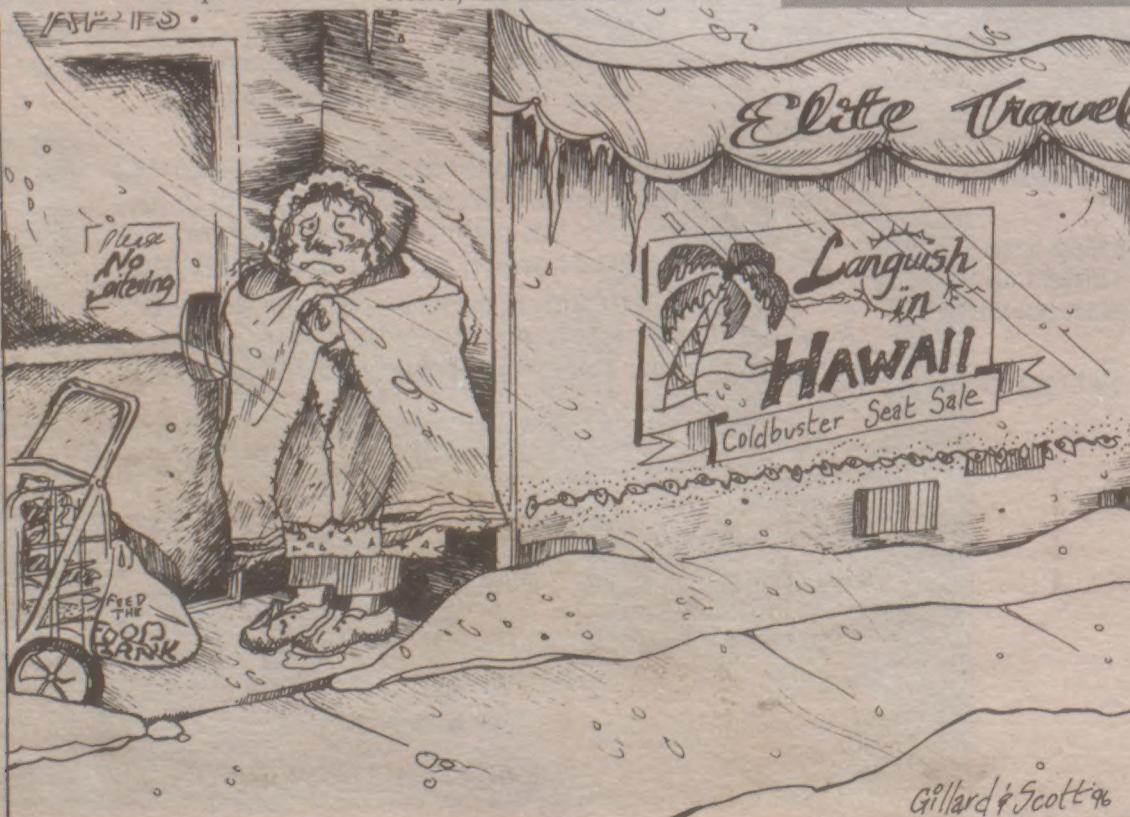
Putting together a paper two times a month is going to pose interesting challenges for us. We do have a wealth of stories about people and can always use more. Our reader survey of the last three months of last year produced some great insights. Thank you to all you who sent in your comments. We are always open to suggestions and submissions, so call, fax, write or e-mail us with what you would like to see in our paper.

And, thank you for your loyal support of this paper and the people who bring it to you on the street. ♦

Keith Wiley.

### Thank you to this month's contributors

Michael Walters Glasel, Allison Kydd, Richard Horne for this month's movie review, Jeff Page, Diane Scott for the editorial page cartoon, Lorne Callaghan for the Sayings Cartoon Quiz, Fiona McNair for the feature on housing, and Ed Greanya in Calgary and Heather Stump in Edmonton for all their efforts. ♦



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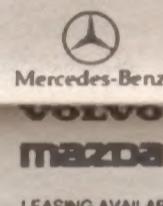
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## Dave's Place

It looked like it used to be a laundry room with a large stained sink underneath a small window.

A strong odour of smoke and rot filled the air as I entered the room. Moving around to get a better angle to take pictures proved dangerous. The floor was completely rotten and my foot fell into a large hole. Dave, my host, tried to turn on the stove but it only leaked out a strong gas smell. He says he never cooks there. After snapping a few more shots of the stained, useless stove, we moved on to the bathroom. A long, narrow room was home to the only toilet for the ten residents of the basement. It was obvious that it had not been cleaned in many months, but I couldn't help wondering if that would even help. Again the floor was rotten and stained. Bugs moved in the cracks in the runners along the perimeter of the room.

Next to this "washroom" was a room with a large shower. The shower needed to be large so one could avoid falling into the large drainage hole in the middle of the floor. Duct tape was plastered around the room to keep the wall from falling in. There were no tiles, towel racks, or anything else found in most bathrooms. The bathroom curtain covering the window was absolutely filthy and rusted onto the rod. I noticed how clean Dave was and I asked, foolishly, if he really showered here. I immediately felt silly - of course he did, where else would he??

The last stop on the tour was Dave's room.

The door to Dave's room was heavily bolted. Inside it was neat, simple, and again, ready to fall down. We were there for less than two minutes when the landlord came in and told me to stop taking pictures. After I'd agreed he didn't leave but began to threaten Dave with eviction for allowing me in. Knowing it was illegal to evict someone without notice, I wanted to jump in but I knew it would probably make the situation worse.

The landlord was a pretty big guy. He told me to leave the property and I did so, reluctantly. He insisted the pictures I had taken not be published. I desperately wanted to ask him what he was afraid of but, fearing for my safety I didn't. I had heard of property owners muscling out tenants without giving them notice, but until now I thought it unbelievable.

Dave has now been evicted for allowing Spare Change to photograph his home. He says he's alright and that he needed to move to a better place anyway, but where will he go?

For the bargain basement price of \$230 per month, you could live there too.

# Living in a slum

## James doesn't have a place

After a long day on his feet selling Spare Change, James, an unemployed roofer, looks for a place to spend the night. Until last month he lived in one of the better rooming houses in the city core. But his home was condemned and now James crashes with any friends willing to take him in for the night.

James says Alberta is supposed to be "the land of milk and honey and it's a shame this land has seen the last of the good times."

He moved here five years ago to pursue a job opportunity and fell into a cycle of drug and alcohol abuse that left him without a job or a home.

Shaking, he lights a cigarette and explains what living conditions have been like in the rooming houses he has called home over the years.

The worst place he lived had 10 bedrooms and only two bathrooms. The smell of gas was always in the air as it leaked from the tiny stoves found in each room.

Every morning a carpet of cockroaches greeted him.

Before anyone came over to visit him, James says he would have to rush to the bathroom and clean it because he says he was "afraid to even go in."

Four years later that house is still renting rooms to desperate inner city residents.

James says to his knowledge it has never been fixed up. He feels like he is "losing the battle."

"It gets to a point where you don't feel like you can do any better," he says.

And this is what the Auditor General of Canada also says. In a report released in 1991, inadequate housing is directly linked to an increase in physical and medical problems that result in additional medical costs to the taxpayer.

The stress of inadequate housing also further complicates family violence and instability, according to the report.

James was recently enrolled in a job skills program but was unable to complete it because of the violence in his rooming house. The late night partying and fighting often kept him awake until it was time to go to his class.

When James told his social worker why he was unable to continue she told him he needed to move. "I told her if she gave me the money to move I would, but she couldn't," says James.

After paying service charges to cash his cheque, James is left with \$360 a month for rent, to buy food and other necessities.

According to Sharon Starr of the Boyle Street Coop Housing Registry, the average rooming house rent per month is at least \$200. This would mean James would be left with \$160 to pay for his food, clothing and personal care.

Current welfare  
for a single person.

The slack must p  
food or clothing al

## Houses Fall Cracks: B Inner City

Making a quick l  
to be simple; buy a  
house, charge inflat  
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An Edmonton re  
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Most inner city la  
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There are 467 roo  
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5 inner city neighbor

According to a re  
official with the Off  
for the City, almost  
extremely poor cond

Extremely poor c  
health and fire safety  
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The house Dave  
was evicted from  
on 96 St. and 107  
Ave., is on the  
inspection list, but  
is not classified as  
the highest priori  
ty. In just the first  
three months of  
last year the City  
inspected 79 build  
ings with 972  
units. They closed  
down 16 buildings  
with 166 units in  
them.

Fiona McNair is a jour  
nalism student at Grant

STORY AND PHOTOS BY FIONA MCNAIR

fare rates allow for \$165 for rent for a single room. This is a figure that is not picked up by taking money away from rooming allowances.

## Falling Through the Big Business in the City

Every buck in Edmonton's inner city seems to buy a run-down, substandard rooming house. Inflated rents to desperate people, and the City will probably take some time

to realize that in real estate agent, that did not want his

landlords why the needy continue to be

sum landlords.

City landlords pay between 60-80 thousand

per rooming house. The real estate agent estimates

taxes are \$700-800 dollars per year.

inner city) are geared to a high return on

the says. These owners go into the business

as much revenue as possible so they can buy

revenue up, the owners neglect the main

properties and charge outrageous rents.

7 rooming houses in the City of

which more than 60 per cent of those found in

neighbourhoods.

a report prepared by Dennis Freeman, an

Office of the Commissioner of Housing

host a third of these buildings are in

condition.

or conditions cover two main areas;

safety. Rooming house fires were responsi-

one death in the city in the last year.

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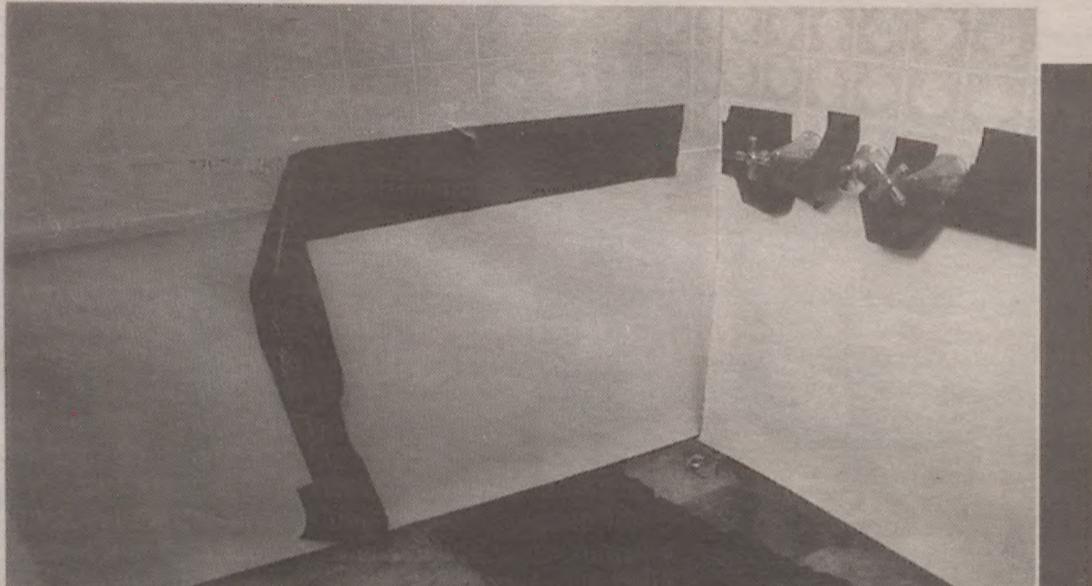
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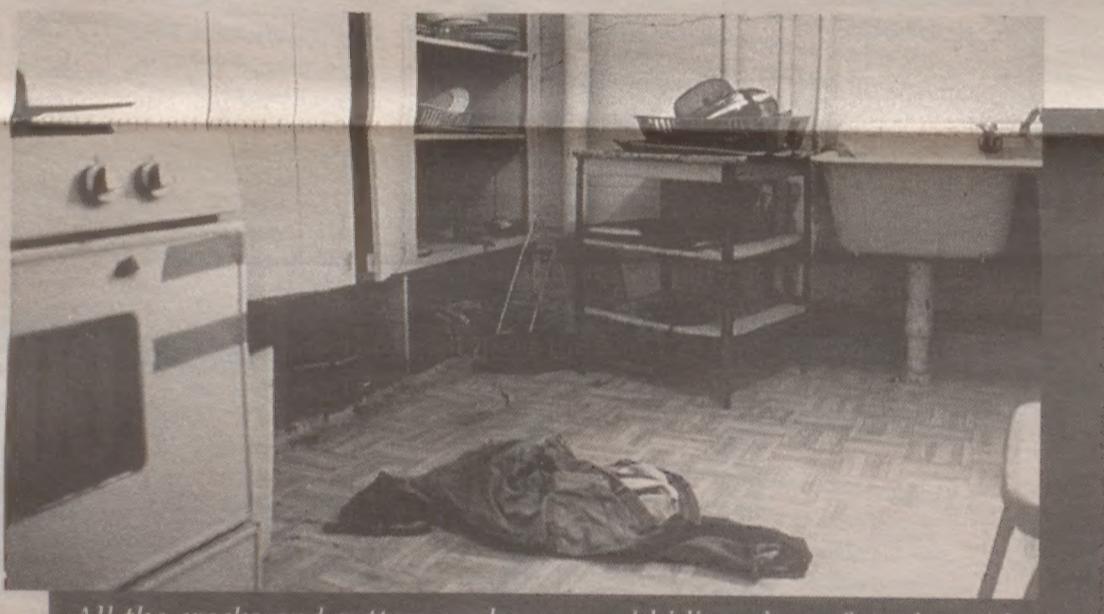
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ant

MacEwan College  
in Edmonton.



Watch the hole in the floor in this shower



All the cracks and gutters are homes and hiding places for a host of wildlife that come out at night at Dave's



Dave doesn't even use this stove in this inner city rooming house. It makes too much of a gas smell.

SPARE  
CHANGE  
JANUARY 15  
1996



# Emily

BY ALLISON KYDD



VIA THE GREYHOUND BUS

## There was little she could do.

**T**he story this far:  
Emily has left her lover, by way of the Greyhound bus, and that's not all the grief she has to remember. At the same time she has to watch out for herself in the present.

Emily watched Murray - that was the name he'd told her, though she didn't much care what he called himself - stumble back to his own seat. He had to climb over the old fellow who'd claimed it since he left. Murray had a mean pout on his face and was making a big production out of the whole thing, as if she was being unkind. Served him right. Thinking a muffin and a cup of coffee was the price of a meal.

There'd been a time when Emily was very young when too much sympathy had been one of her problems with men. Like when she was thirteen and raped behind the barn by her cousin Arnold Broken Wing. She was the one who was wounded. Her back was scratched and bruised where he'd dragged her through the underbrush before he began to tear at her clothes. Now, above the torn blue jeans wound around her ankles, the red smear of her lost virginity stained the pale skin of her thighs. But she held him and let him

cry on her shoulder for all his griefs.

When it was over, he'd begged her not to tell her parents. They all knew about her father's temper - the family, the elders, the public health nurse - so she didn't tell, though the marks on her slim body meant that at bedtime she had to hide herself from her sisters.

Another reason she didn't tell was because she thought maybe it was her fault. She'd noticed many times how Arnold was watching her with those strange eyes of his, dark and mysterious in his thin, dark, handsome face. Knowing he was watching her, she'd felt a wild and unfamiliar thrill in parts of her body she was only just discovering.

She'd even dreamed of him, imagined how it might be to touch the wind-blown black hair that hung down over the collar of his leather jacket. To have him touch her. If she'd hidden herself from him then, she'd still have been the good girl her mother wanted. But instead she'd walked slowly around him, slinky as a cat, lifting her arms and fluffing up her long hair, letting her bottom sway the way she saw on T.V.

She never doubted that it was her fault

17

mother's eyes she was now bad for her family. She wanted to die for what she'd done. Then her mother's manner softened a little.

"You know what happened to me when I stayed on the reserve and had you. Fifteen years and never a kind word I had from him before my old man died. He beat me almost every day too. You want to end up with a face like this?"

Emily had looked in a new way at her mother's face when she said that. In the past she'd often seen it dark with bruises, and there was a small white scar which spoiled the shape of her mouth, as well as another scar along one eyebrow. But still she loved her mother's face and her mother's house and didn't want to leave it.

"I'm scared. I want you to be with me."

"The sisters will look after you better than me."

The sisters did look after Emily, as her mother said they would. They kept her safely hidden away until she could have the baby, until the baby found a good home. But no one cared enough about Emily to come and rub her back in the middle of the night, like her mother and

her kookum had when she was young.

There was the time she'd sprained her ankle at school, and the gym teacher carried her to the school bus. She was a gangly girl, tall and well-developed for her thirteen years, but thin too, and he lifted her up so easily.

Mr. Forester, the driver, took her all the way home too, right into the yard, over the bumpy dirt track right up to her mother's house. If her foot hadn't been hurting so much, Emily would have been embarrassed to have the other kids on the bus see the place where she lived. She'd have been sure they'd laugh at her. But she hardly noticed their chatter and their faces pressed up against the window.

Besides, she was hurt, so everyone was being very nice to her. Her mother and her kookum came rushing out the door to see what was the matter. Emily hardly even cared that her mother had rollers in her hair and was wearing her baggy sweater and old patched jeans of her father's.

When they saw what had happened and that Emily wasn't hurt too bad, Emily's mother and Kookum invited the driver and all the kids to stay for supper.

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when she went walking with him again, many times over the next two years. Sometimes they'd meet in neighbours' barns or sheds or burned-out old cars. When that wasn't safe, he'd pull her down into dark patches of bush, and she didn't know whether she was more afraid of him or of coyotes and other stealthy creatures of the night who might be close by.

There was little she could do. Arguing or fighting only made him more wild, far more wild than the wildness in her. But in time her body learned a hunger for him, and she thought this was what it meant to be a woman.

That winter her father died. Cirrhosis of the liver, the doctors said. Then, if Arnold hadn't been her cousin, they wouldn't have had to hide anymore. In the old days many women were chosen by their men when they were very young. But, as it was, what they did in the dark would always be secret and forbidden.

In time Emily found there were loving things she could do to calm her cousin, to make him gentler with her body. It was during one of the gentler times, when they'd kissed and stroked each other as they lay down together, that her cousin

Arnold gave her a baby. She knew the time because it was only a few days later when she heard he'd left the reserve and gone north into the deep bush with her uncle Emile, her mother's brother, who followed the trap-lines. She never saw either of them again.

Her kookum was first to see the changes in Emily and read what they meant. Her mother cried.

"You foolish girl," she said, "you weren't supposed to do what I did. You were going to finish school and have a better life, maybe come back and be a teacher. Now, I have to send you away from here."

"No, please, no!" Emily'd put her arms around her mother and tried to hold on. "I want to stay here and help with the little ones."

But Tanyss - her surname was then Francis, and her first-name was a tribute to her daughter's was - could be tough as well as gentle.

"I have Kookum to help with the little ones. You think I want another one of my girls to end up like you?"

Emily'd gasped to know that in her

18

mommy, I want to go home. Mommy, make the pain go.

When it was finally over, they wouldn't even let her look at him. In fact, she only knew she'd had a boy because she heard one nurse tell another and the other respond.

"Small, of course - poor thing's only a kid herself - but a fighter. He'll have to be. And look at all that black hair; hard to believe they're so cute, when they're babies, isn't it?"

So she gave him the name "Fighter" in her heart, but she never knew him. It was the sixties. Some parts of the world were beginning to celebrate free love and to talk about the Age of Aquarius, but a girl like her couldn't be allowed to practise that sort of thing. Neither could she be allowed to see the baby she'd been carrying in her slim, girlish body for almost nine months. Doubtless some good, clean-living English or Scottish or Dutch or German couple took her baby and raised him almost like he was their own.

Fighter. I never knew him. I will never know him. ♦

(End of instalment six - story to be continued)

SPARE  
CHANGE  
JANUARY 15  
1996

20



# Sparky

BY SPARKY COY

## Fast Food Daze

I was walking past a Dairy Queen this morning when I started thinking about the proletariat.

Since leaving my hometown of Flatt, Alberta two years ago, I have held a variety of jobs, most of them unskilled and demeaning to a person of my commitment and disposition. At the moment I am unemployed, wandering the city looking for that most elusive of activities - a job that suits my temperament and inherent laziness.

When the trucker dropped me off in the city, I had only to take three steps to get my first job. One of the best things about being from "out of town" is the opportunity to lie on job applications. The teen aged manager of the Dairy Queen, next to the Esso where the semi let me off, had no sooner heard my first untrue qualification than he was joyfully removing the Help Wanted sign from the door.

I had told him that I worked for Burger Joey's in Flatt, although the closest thing our part of Alberta had to fast food was the Donair Caravan in Champion, city of Edmonton. The manager said he'd heard of our infamous Joey Basket and was impressed. I'm convinced I'd invented the entire franchise, but the manager's face seemed to actually break out with his memories of the chicken finger based Joey Basket, so I went with it.

I got the job as Brazier Boy, and I used my last bit of money to rent a hotel room for a few months. I imagined that I'd soon have a job in the big city doing what I'd been doing in Flatt for ten years - giant compost heap maintenance. If a city the size of Flatt could run a giant compost heap, albeit with an avalanche of provincial funding, I was sure that any medium sized prairie city must have communal compost heaps large and dense enough to accommodate millions of organic waste units a year.

What a fantasy. In my two years here, I haven't even found "composting" in the phone book, and my days have been wasted in a string of greasy jobs, each paying less than the last.

My stint as a Brazier Boy was short-lived, and in fact when, two months after being fired, I moved out of the old hotel, I was relieved not to have to walk past the Dairy Queen to get home. I could always see that smug teen-aged manager perched in the drive thru, headset buzzing, sneer-

ing at me just as he had on my last day.

The burger wraps finally made him snap. Try as I might, I could never get the mock foil paper wrapping to cling to the burger. Whether it be the Brazier, Super Brazier, Mondo Brazier or Mound O' Brazier, the mock foil paper wrapping was somehow repelled from the sandwich, creating a cluttered bag and an unhappy teen-aged manager.

"Okay, Coy," he honked at me one evening. "Let's not kid ourselves. Your burger wrapping abilities are insufficient. You're a hard working, good kid, but I'm afraid after you finish mopping the meat unit freezer you're fired."

I was stunned. In all those years at the Flatt Compost Complex I had been my own boss and only employee. Even when I worked changing the population sign outside of town I had never even been reprimanded. I'm a good worker, an energetic, optimistic team player. And here was a high school dropout calling me a good kid while fantasizing about chicken fingers?

I couldn't stand it.

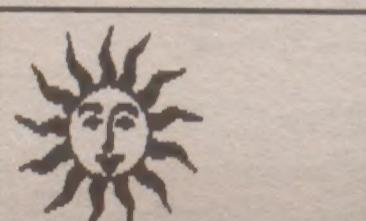
"Return your washed uniform tomorrow and you can fill out the paper work to get your last cheque, minus firing deductions, you know."

The uniform consisted of a single polyester shirt, which I proceeded to remove and dunk in the mop water. After hanging the shirt on the mop handle, I barged my way past the manager.

"Uniform's clean."

I received the cheque yesterday. \$125.68 for a week of work, minus firing deductions.

The good news is that I have an interview tomorrow at Burger Joey's on 93rd. ♦



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The  
things  
they  
say

"A novel without a story is like having a car and growing flowers in it."

—Novelist Robert Harris.

"I did enjoy the first week I was there. I met some lovely people."

—Former hostage John McCarthy on Beirut.

"It's odd meeting someone who's sleeping with your wife. But what do you say to a man who's killed a lion with his bare hands?"

—Mr Michael Mason on his wife's holiday romance with a Masai warrior.

"There seems to be an unholy alliance of people who want me to be kept alive but don't want me to have a good time."

—Salman Rushdie.

"I remember what Ernest Hemingway said — that Man is not made for defeat."

— Human Rights activist Harry Wu, expelled from China.

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## MOVIE • Review

# Canadian Bacon, a nice movie

BY RICHARD HORNE

With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, the US found itself in a rather odd situation - a victor without any spoils, without any ticker tape parade and without a scapegoat for the spiraling economic situation at home. Without the "evil empire", the United States government has nothing to distract its well-armed citizens with and no reason to continue funding the military industrial complex that has kept the country running for the last fifty years. If you're going to be a super-power with a trillion dollar debt, you have to have an enemy. And if you can't find one, you better make one up. And who better than Canada. After all, we speak funny, we're so damn nice, we have free health care (or so they think), and 90% of our population live within short bombing range.

This is the premise of Michael Moore's new film, Canadian Bacon, a satirical poke at the end of the cold war and a delightful mirror of Canada's international image as hockey playing, beer drinking, polite guys who almost never end a sentence with a preposition. Moore is best known as a sociological commentator and documentary filmmaker. His first film, *Roger and Me*, was a scathing indictment of Chrysler's management and the effects of an auto plant closing in the small town of Flint, Michigan. Moore's television journal, *TV Nation*, showed 60 Minutes and 20/20 the real potential of TV magazines by making average Joes into front line reporters and giving them the power to investigate their own communities. Canadian Bacon is Moore's first foray into fiction



and, although it is somewhat uneven, it is still a hilarious film, especially when the antagonists are those nasty, ne'er-do-wells, the Canadians.

Alan Alda plays a lame-duck US president, down in the polls and on his way to losing the upcoming election. His advisors, Kevin Pollack and Rip Torn, are looking desperately for a way to boost their leader's popularity and get the voters' mind off of the endless stream of unemployment and factory closures. When Niagara Sheriff Bud Boomer (John Candy) is arrested for disturbing the peace at a hockey game in Canada (for dissing our beer), Alda finally has the excuse to turn the screws on Canada. Aided by a sinister CIA spook who has been studying us from his office in the coffee room for years, it's a war of words and a whole new cold war sooner than you can spell Saskatchewan.

Despite some weaknesses in the writing, sometimes it's painfully obvious that Moore hasn't written dialogue before, the film largely succeeds. There is a delightful cameo by Dan Ackroyd as a linguistically correct Canadian traffic cop and an exhausting climb up to the top of the CN Tower in the city Americans claim is our capital, Toronto. There are those devilishly polite Canadians, who respond "oh, excuse me" when shoved and a sinister propaganda film about us devious Canucks - so peace-loving on the outside, but so evil on the inside. Oh yes, there is also the threat of total nuclear annihilation. In short, it has just about everything a really good satire should have and it has Canadians to boot!

Although Canadian Bacon has finished its theatrical run it should be available on video in the near future and I highly recommend you check it out. Please do, yes, thank you very much. ♦

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# CROSSWORD • Puzzle 24

## A C R O S S

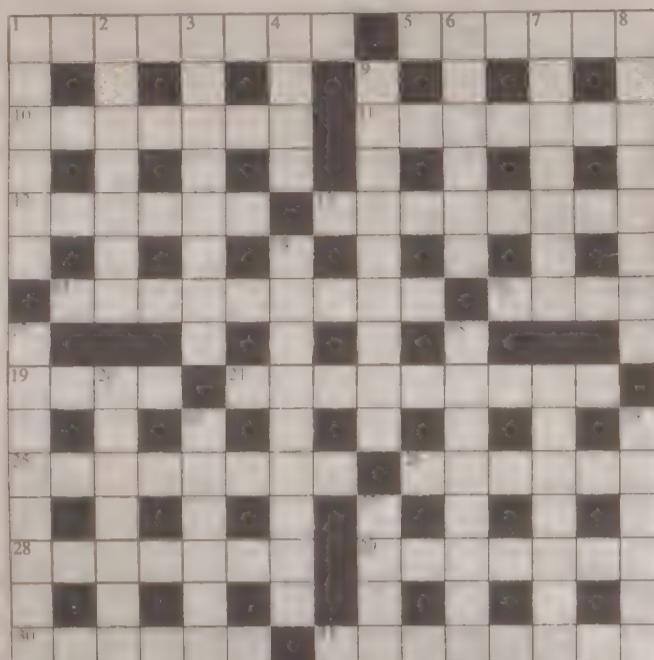
- To linger beyond a limit (4,4)
- Scrooge's favourite word, sweet? (6)
- To worship (7)
- Revelation (7)
- Billy Goats Gruff fought them (6)
- Green precious stones (8)
- From ancient Greek city (9)
- Not busy (4)
- frost (4)
- Someone injured in print (9)
- Compound containing quartz (8)
- Sharp and cold, ie a gaze (6)
- Distilled from another substance (7)
- Choral composition, often accompanied (7)
- Types of wide belt (6)
- Used to hold torches or words (8)

BY SUSAN ANDREWS

## D O W N

- A narcotic (6)
- Study of the environment (7)
- Load takes up an entire vessel (4,4)
- Pinnacle (4)
- Referee in baseball (7)
- Hurried around (7)
- Boots worn in bad weather (8)
- Forever (9)
- Hydro, phone (9)
- Cats' sensory organs (8)
- Germanic (8)
- Books showing the world (7)
- To raise in a lift? (7)
- A candlestick (6)
- Operation performed on heart (6)
- Mark of a fighter (4)

► **Puzzle 23**  
and **24**  
answers will  
be published  
in the  
February 1  
issue of  
**Spare  
Change**.



## SOUPLINE BOB

SOUPLINE BOB



## OVERKILL

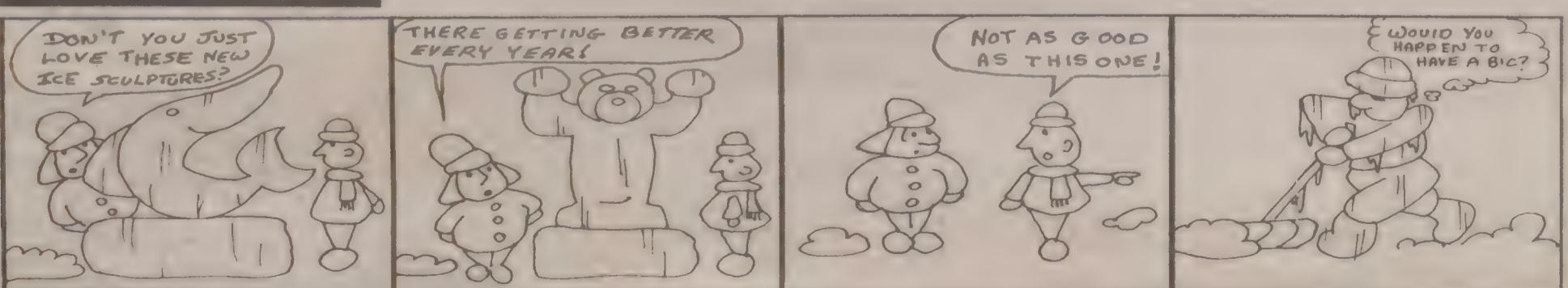


ISA YOUNG



SPARE  
CHANGE

## DEEP FREEZE



JANUARY 15  
1996

## Not For Sale

I sell Spare Change, but that is all  
I'm not for sale at any price...  
My past life is classified.  
I sell a paper, don't ask me why  
There are things a dollar or two can't buy,

My life story is not for sale  
Nor are the reasons why I'm here.  
Don't question how I live my life  
Or spend the money that I earn.

If your boss paid you only if your needs  
Were in line with what he thought for you,  
Would you be paid? How much?

Trust me to know what I need, too.  
Don't judge me by appearances, the clothes I  
wear  
Or make plans for my life.

I sell Spare Change, but not my soul,  
I'm not for sale at any price.

## Trying Times

The funny things that form our minds  
That twists and turns deceives in time  
Makes our hearts turn cold with wine  
Sells our souls to the Father Time  
We soon forget the hard true lines  
And run and hide behind the vines  
The lovely smell of sour wine!!  
The world becomes a fantasy fine  
And we forget our untrue times  
Forever lost within our minds

JANUARY

## "Don't judge me"

Have you ever been abused?  
Have you ever been used?  
Have you ever been on the street?

And nobody cared.

Have you ever been drunk?  
Have you ever been high?  
Have you ever just wanted to die?

And didn't know how to ask  
for help or  
know that it was there.

Have you ever been lonely?  
Have you ever been depressed?  
Have you ever been in shock?

And everyone just walked away.

If you've ever been there  
Then you can't judge me  
and I can't judge you  
Have you ever been there?  
Yes, I do care!

JEAN

## Weekends

If you want to make a two day week-end  
seem like four, or more,  
May I suggest on Friday night  
You step right through their door.

They are poor, or sick or lonely  
And they live alone, or worse  
They often wake up hungry or cold  
Or scared or hurt.

Some have had it all and lost it,  
To drugs or booze or moods.  
Some have never had it  
Maybe that's even worse.

Their weekends never end,  
And their weeks end up all wrong.  
Sunday is like Tuesday is like  
Friday is like Thursday.  
All the same ...all too long.

ISABEL HENRI  
CALGARY

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# Sparky

BY SPARKY COY

I ran into Lobo and we started talking about Sandi Pitts.

Sandi Pitts ran the restaurant in Flatt, Alberta, Compost Capital of Canada. She ran it alone, and offered a variety of meat loaves. Sandi cooked, waited, bussed and hosted. Sandi's Speed Bump Cafe was undeniably her own. In the 1980s, with the compost business booming and, thereby, the provincial government all but funding our entire town, Sandi enjoyed great success as a small business owner in rural Alberta.

Before 1981, the good people of Flatt had never heard of compost. Flatt used to be located on the CN line. Sandi's mum, Salti, had run Salti's Speed Bump Cafe as a whistle stop cafe. When the train stopped stopping in Flatt, and later, when it even quit running through town altogether, our community stood in danger of drying up.

I was sixteen when the miracle occurred, THE ALBERTA WASTE DISPOSAL STUDY GRANT MIRACLE. The miracle that breathed new life into Flatt, Alberta.

As Flatt Composite and Industrial Tech's most sensible and optimistic student, I received a mysterious scholarship to study abroad, in Champion, city of Edmonton, one hundred clicks away. While there, in a secret educational facility, I became a composting expert, a veritable mulching genius, a rot maintenance engineer. After a year of intense study, I returned home to run the Flatt Compost Heap. As part of a secret provincial government social experiment, all bio-degradable garbage from Western Alberta was sent to Flatt from 1981 to 1994. I

## In Search of Sand Pitts

ruled over the entire province's egg shells and carrot greens for thirteen years.

Sandi Pitts was my best friend, and we were able to revel a standard of living that most people in their twenties can only dream about. Every day, I would get off work and go help Sandi with the dinner rush at her restaurant. The population of Flatt was roughly twenty three in 1993, and every citizen, living off the provincial teat, would eat every meal at Sandi's Speed Bump Cafe. We were like Romans.

The average person's weight rose by thirty-six pounds during the 1980's. Melodia Tubbs, a very nimble seamstress who lived with her deranged mother in Tubbs mansion on Tubbs hill near Tubbs field, made a fortune letting out pants. We drank so much milk that our hair began collectively growing at an alarming rate. Peavey, THE WORLD'S LOUDEST BARBER, once lived in a sprawling country estate, the result of wild riches.

In 1993, the letter came. Cutbacks. Layoffs. The compost experiment had been deemed a failure. Within two months of receiving the letter, the entire heap was gone. Since much of the town's wealth had been artificial, based on bank loans and speculation and letters from the province promising cheques, creditors began moving in like ants. Sandi's Speed Bump Cafe closed in 1994. Sandi moved away.

I'm still trying to find her. If you have met Sandi Pitts - thirtyish, educated, under-employed - please tell her to contact me, c/o Spare Change newspaper. ♦

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## MOVIE • Review

# Nobody has to be happy

BY RICHARD HORNE

Whatever happened to the dream factory? Remember way back when Hollywood used to make movies that would transport us to a magical place where every story had a happy ending and everything was swell? Well, wake up, this is the nineties damn it and nobody has to be happy. In fact damn few people are happy anymore.

Right now there are two fine films playing, perfect for anyone who yearns for depression and can't find enough of it on the news. Mike Figgis' ode to the bottle: *Leaving Las Vegas*, and Tim Robbins' death row field trip, *Dead Man Walking*. Both stories are semi-autobiographical downers which will stick with you for days with their powerful scripts and great performances. Seen back to back, these two films are enough to make even Mr. Rogers ask his doctor to increase his Prozac prescription.

Nicholas Cage plays a has-been writer and Hollywood hack who decides to make his last stand in America's gaudiest nightclub, Las Vegas. No motivation is ever given for his descent into the bottle, even Cage is unsure, joking "I don't know if my wife left me because of my drinking or if I started drinking when my wife left me." Ultimately it doesn't matter, as nothing matters to an addict except his next fix, and Cage has come to Vegas determined to drink himself to death in the next thirty days.

Along the way to oblivion, Cage meets his emotional doppelganger, a prostitute played by the formerly perky Elizabeth Shue. Ravaged by the emotional detachment of her profession and her vicious pimp, Shue's character finds herself falling in love with this man who asks nothing of her except her company. Together the two characters struggle to establish a relationship despite Cage's death wish. As Cage says "Sure, these last couple days have been great, but there's the vomiting, the blood, black-outs... really, I'm not a great guy to live with."

Cage is fantastic, giving an incredible performance more than worthy of his Oscar nomination and Shue also manages to create a character far stronger than any of her previous outings

would suggest she was capable of delivering. Together, they make their characters human beings and not typical Hollywood caricatures - you can't help watching and feeling for these two proud rejects of society.

Like *Leaving Las Vegas*, *Dead Man Walking* is also a dark, depressing film that forces us to look into a segment of society we would rather ignore.

*Dead Man Walking* is the story of Sister Helen Prejean, a Catholic nun of a somewhat privileged background, who leaves her good works in the projects to sit with a convicted death row inmate.

Prejean is played marvelously by Susan Sarandon, who gives her nun just the right amount of righteousness and naivete to fall flat on her habit and stand back up again. Sean Penn, as the thug Poncellette, proves that he really does belong on the other side of the camera. *Poncellette* is a swastika-tattooed white trash racist, all swagger and bravado who cares about his moth-

er's tears and his baby brother's camping trip in the backyard.

Robbins establishes early on that *Poncellette* will die, so the majority of the movie concentrates on the travails of Sister Prejean, as she moves from trying to redeem her prisoner, to being confronted by the families of the victims, to trying to resolve her work with a man she knows is guilty. We see *Poncellette* stripped of his machismo and finding his humanity as his execution becomes imminent.

Robbins has the good judgment to not making *Dead Man Walking* into a "message" film about the good or bad of the death penalty. The film forces us to look within ourselves and ask what we feel - what if it was our son and daughter killed? Does murder justify court-sanctioned homicide? Does a man who has viciously murdered an innocent deserve to live? The echoes of violence go far beyond the act of murder itself.

In the end, *Dead Man Walking* is a better film than *Leaving Las Vegas* because it succeeds on the level of a great piece of art - it forces us to confront ourselves and makes us question what is right, what is just and what is the difference between the two. An altogether remarkable film. ♦



▲ *Dead Man Walking*.

▲ *Leaving Las Vegas*.

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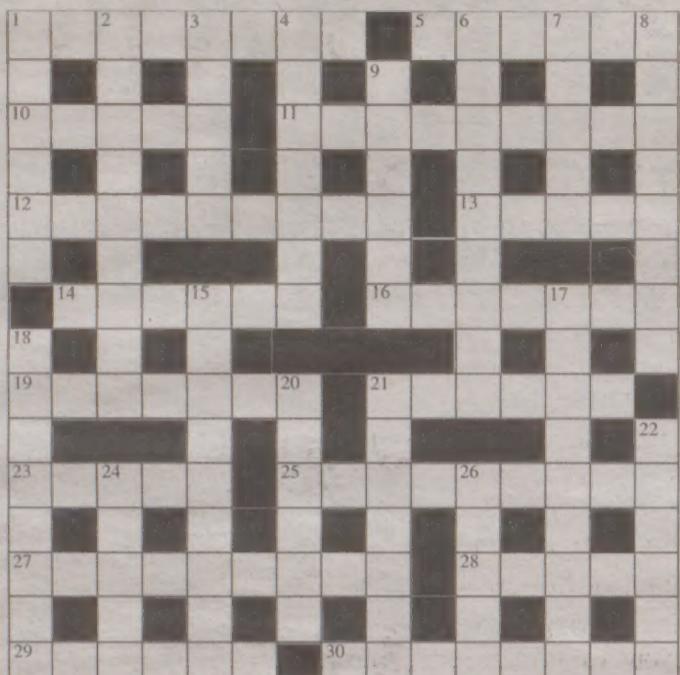
1996

# CROSSWORD • Puzzle 27

## A C R O S S

- 1 Venetian canal boats (8)
- 5 A person's possessions (6)
- 10 Type of branch carried by a dove (5)
- 11 Complex, detailed (9)
- 12 Plateau (5,4)
- 13 Boredom (5)
- 14 To stitch a wound together (6)
- 16 Feline howling (7)
- 19 Receptacle for butts – the smoking kind (7)
- 21 Meat & veggies cooked on a skewer (6)
- 23 Capital of India: New \_\_\_\_\_ (5)
- 25 Providing treatment (9)
- 27 Goaty figure on horoscope (8)
- 28 Made of links (5)
- 29 Eastern European country (6)
- 30 The Book of Psalms (7)

BY SUSAN ANDREWS

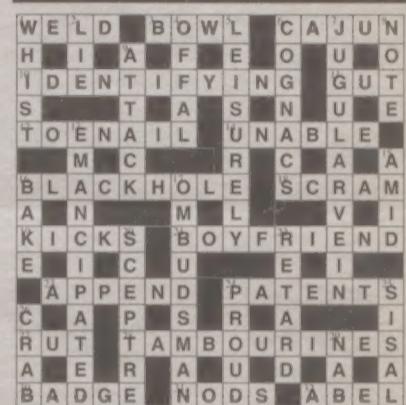


## D O W N

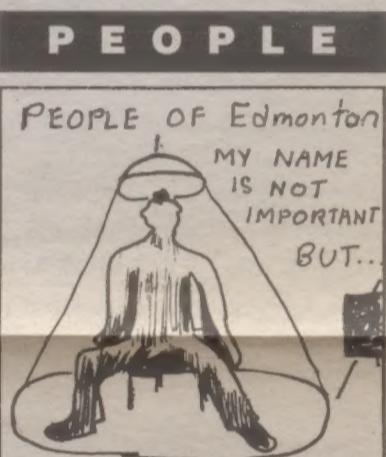
- 1 Artificial cave (6)
- 2 Used to apply polish to fingertips (4,5)
- 3 Grossly fat (5)
- 4 To shake or upset (7)
- 6 Arachnid's home is a trap (6,3)
- 7 One more time! (5)
- 8 Periods between day and night (8)
- 9 Slang: a guy who thinks he's hot stuff (6)
- 15 Someone from the Ukraine (9)
- 17 Overlapping edge, like tiles (9)
- 18 To deliberately hinder (8)
- 20 Strong herb with white or pink flowers (6)
- 21 Traditional Japanese robes (7)
- 22 A business doing business for another (6)
- 24 Continuation of a jacket collar (5)
- 26 Sticker with paper backing (5)

► Puzzle 27 answers will be published in the March 15 issue of *Spare Change*.

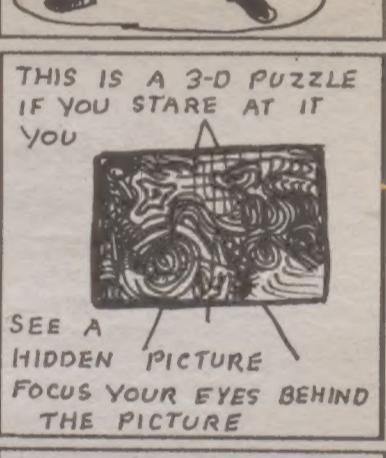
Answers to February 15 Crossword #26



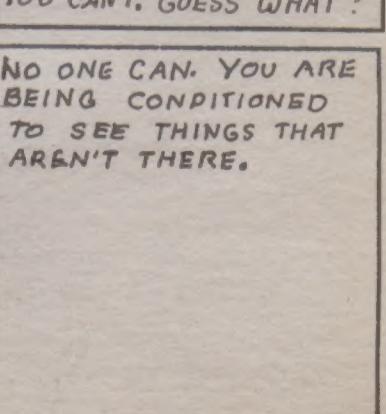
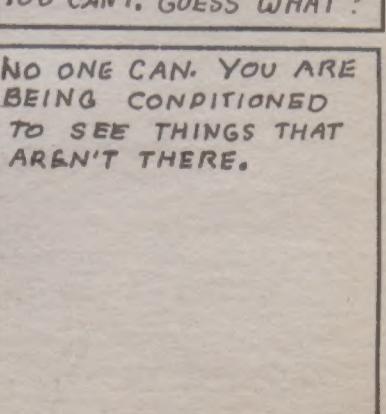
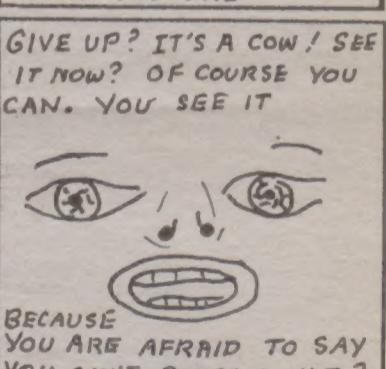
## SOUPLINE BOB



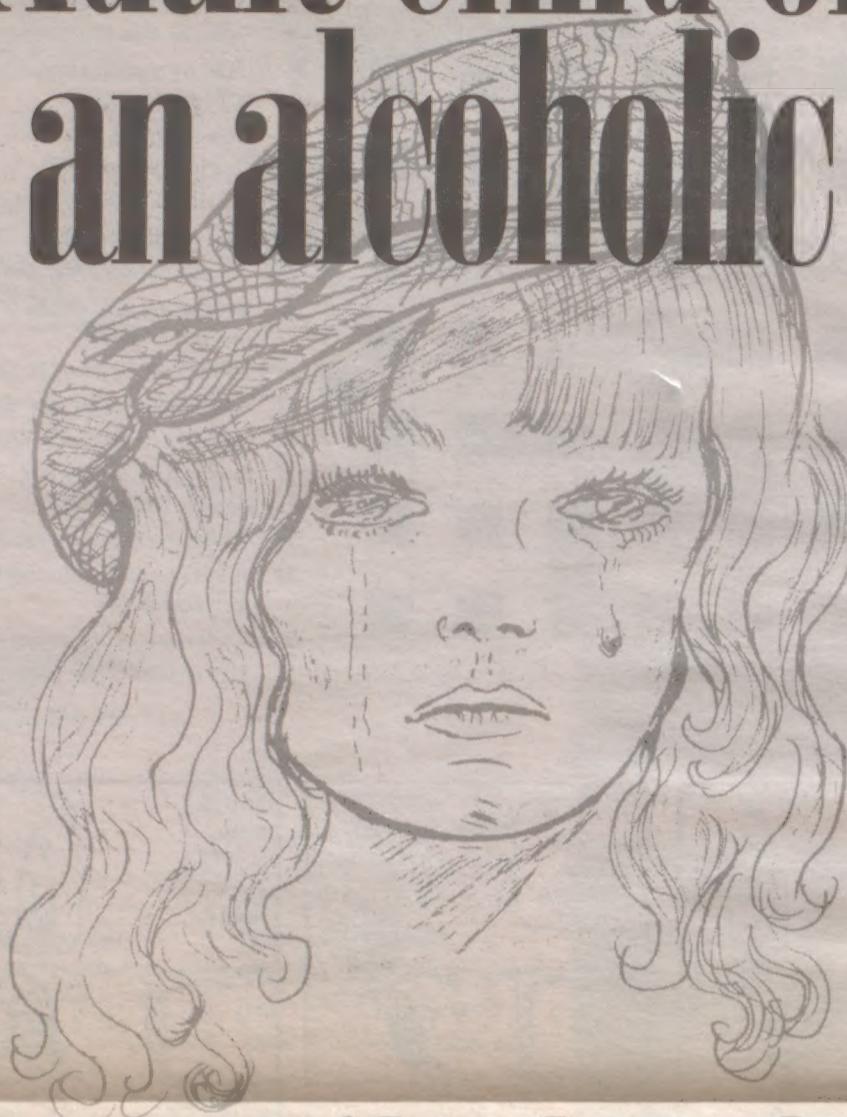
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# Adult child of an alcoholic



I found the picture in a box of old photographs. There were four children, a big brother, solemn and a little aloof, and three white-blond girls distinguishable one from the other by size alone. On individual photos it would be difficult to tell who was who. Even in adulthood, we were often mistaken one for the other. What the picture did not show was how one of those pretty little girls became a monster of selfishness usurping authority over an entire family and ruling the household with rage and torrents of verbal abuse.

Early in life we became players in a dark drama. Unknowingly, we all lived up to the roles assigned and inevitably we were shaped by those roles.

As a result, for most of my life I was haunted by an intangible deficit, unaware that it was not I who was defective in myself, but that I had accepted the judgements of others.

I was an ugly child. I knew that I was ugly. I was five years old and we were sitting in the lamplight around the supper table. Susan was on Mom's lap, and Martha had her place next to Dad. Mom laughed in that nasty way she had when she was criticizing someone. "Linda looks mad when she's happy," she said, then went on to comment on my long nose. Martha had a turned up nose, mine was straight.

By the time I started school, I was considered so ugly that my brother and sisters wouldn't walk with me.

I was the bad child. When my big sister Martha would yell at me, I would sometimes strike out at her. I was always spanked for that. One day, I came in from outside and she immediately started raging. I was holding a teapot, and hit her with it. Dad came in, took one look at her crying, and got out a switch. He never asked me why I hit her. I ran and hid out in the bush all afternoon.

Dad always defended her without question, and she, for her part, acted a different role for his benefit. She could stop a tirade in the middle of a word when he came in. I guess even then she knew how to win in the game we played.

Martha was very special. When she was thirteen, Dad built an extension on the house. Martha got her own room. The rest of the family still shared the other bedroom, five of us in all. She got herself curtains and fixed up her room, allowing no one else to enter.

Not so privileged, I had to do the

had long since learned that there was no defense. Later, he exchanged the offending hair dryer for the model she decreed. He never bought anyone another Christmas gift, and she never said thank-you.

We were accomplices in keeping the family secret. Something was wrong, and we were ashamed in some way. "They" must not know. What went on at home was private. It was not even spoken of among ourselves.

I am an adult child of alcoholism.

The roles we played are common to families where one or both parents are alcoholic. The "well" parent becomes the co-dependent, keeping the peace at all costs, and enabling the "sick" member to survive. The children become polarized into different roles. In our family, my brother was the lost child. He had little to say. No one really even considered what he needed or wanted. It was inconsequential to the family dynamics. My sister Martha was the hero, and like a true hero endowed with heroic qualities. She was cast in the role of saviour for the family. She was pretty, smart, and always right. The rest of us loved her with a hero-worshipping love and like an angry god she was unpacified by the sacrifices laid at her feet. She spurned us all as being so far beneath her as to be not worth knowing. As the scapegoat, I was Martha's dark counterpart. We were very much alike in intelligence, in looks, and in talents, but so that she could be good, I had to be bad, ugly, and inferior. I was required to do the things which were too awful for her to do. Whenever I succeeded in equaling or surpassing her achievements, her position of power was threatened. Even as an adult, she could get upset by seeing me in a pretty blouse or by my writing. She alone was to be the gifted one. Susan, the baby, was our mascot. We all loved her and cared for her. She brought lightness and fun to our world. She was cute and comical, loving and sharing.

Today, as adults, Susan and I are best friends as well as sisters. My brother lives quietly, and does not write or visit, but we know that he is there for us at any time. Martha has cut herself off from the rest of the family, her step children as well as us, since, in her words, we have nothing to offer her. I mourn for the loss of a sister I never really knew. ♦

## I was considered so ugly...

BY LINDA DUMONT

things that she refused to do. In the first grade, we shared a big black lunchkit. She was three years older than I, but we were to take turns carrying it to school. As soon as we got out of sight of the house, she put it down on the road and walked away. Crying, I picked up the lunch-kit and carried it. That was when I made a resolve never to ask anyone else to do something that was too awful for me to do myself. We all worked with my Dad in the field. On some jobs we took turns. Often, when it came to her turn Martha simply refused. Because she was special, she could get away with it.

Then, I had to do her work as well as mine. Dad always took her part, except once. That was the day when we had been haying all day. It was the last load, and her turn to stack. She started to walk home, getting out of

her job again. Enraged, I pursued, and kicked her in the leg, hard. She yelled in pain and ran, yowling, towards the house. Dad looked, but said nothing. For the first time, I was not punished. It was a hollow victory, because I still had to stack the hay.

To us all, Martha was an icon of perfection. We tried to please her, but it was like laying offerings at the feet of an angry god. When my brother got his first job, he bought us Christmas gifts. He bought Martha a hair dryer, me a blue bead necklace, and Susan a wrist-watch which she still treasures today. Susan and I were excited, until the shining moment was shattered. Martha erupted into a wild tirade. The hair dryer was the wrong model. We sat in a frozen tableau. No one dared to make a move lest her wrath be redirected at one of us. My brother said nothing. We all

### Adult Children of Alcoholism The Child Cries

I walk the edges of the yawning pit  
And a child's cries echo from the depth of it;  
She's lost in a darkness I dare not see  
Lest I come face to face with me.  
Just walk away, just let her die  
But wait, I can't, for I am she and she is !